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Meeting Notes

Attendees: See Attached List

Date/Time: 11/15/01

Project No.: 50885

Place: Salem High School

Re: Public Informational Meeting

Notes taken by: Tony Grande

Prior to the formal presentation, plans were set up in an "open house" setting to address issues, comments, and questions in an informal manner with the public on an individual basis.

For the formal meeting, Jeff Brillhart opened the meeting and made introductions. He explained that this meeting is one of five Public Informational meetings being held by the Department in each of the communities along the study section of I-93 from Salem to Manchester. This meeting focuses what the Department has been doing for the last several months for the 18-mile study section of I-93 and more specifically the section of I-93 in Salem beginning at the Stateline and running northerly to the Salem/Windham town line.

Jeff explained that the Department is charged with improving the capacity and safety this 18-mile section. He explained that in the Salem and Manchester areas, the highway currently carries over 110,000 vpd (vehicles per day) and 70,000 vpd, respectively. I-93 has a theoretical capacity to carry in the vicinity of 60,000vpd to 70,000 vpd. By 2020, the projected volumes are approximately 140,000 vpd in Salem and 85,000 vpd in Manchester. The highway is over capacity today. Given the volume of vehicles on the highway, and the narrow width of the highway, I-93 is less forgiving than it otherwise might be, and consequently less safe.

The Department is conducting the design and evaluation process using the format of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS follows five phases. The first phase or Scoping phase was completed in May 2000 with the publication of the Scoping Report. The second phase was completed in February of 2001 with the publication of the Rationale Report. The Rationale Report documents the evaluation and screening of various alternatives. The recommendations in the Rationale Report include the following:

- Consider widening I-93 to be three lanes in each direction the entire length.
- Consider widening I-93 to be four lanes in each direction the entire length.
- Consider widening I-93 to be four lanes south of Exit 3 and three lanes north of Exit 3 in both directions.

- Construct park and ride lots at Exits 2, 3, and 5, and enhance the Exit 4 Park and ride lot as appropriate.
- Expand existing bus service to Boston with stops at Exits 2, 3, and 5 as well as Exit 4.
- Enhance bus service by providing service between the NH park and ride lots and the industrial areas along I-93 in northern Massachusetts.
- Utilize Intelligent Transportation System Technology (ITS) and improve upon the Department's incident management capabilities.
- Incorporate TDM and TSM measures as practicable. The TSM would include short-term, localized improvements to address immediate safety concerns and capacity improvements where possible. TDM measures include initiatives to encourage motorists to carpool, use bus service, telecommute, and otherwise make fewer trips, and thus reduce demand on the highway.

The Rationale Report also suggested that the Department not pursue the following:

- Instituting rail service as part of this project at this point in time. Ridership for any rail service would not eliminate the need to widen the highway. However, the Report notes that rail service will in all likelihood be required in the future if NH is to maintain the level of mobility that is expected today. It is proposed that any widening of I-93 be done in such a manner as to retain the room for the possibility of a rail line in the highway corridor sometime in the future.
- Constructing high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, as the ridership will not meet the threshold necessary to justify the lanes.

Currently the Department is in Phase III of the EIS development process. The DEIS document is scheduled to be available in March of 2002.

Other activities the Department is addressing include:

- A bike route or trail is being evaluated along I-93 corridor.
- Potential secondary impacts are being evaluated, which are different than direct impacts. Direct impacts are impacts to resources (i.e. wetlands, etc.) and properties, which are immediately related to the highway-widening footprint. Secondary impacts (which may happen as a result of making NH more accessible by widening the highway) occur when additional homes and businesses are developed creating its own environmental impacts. To study these secondary impacts, the Department is utilizing an Expert Panel. The panel of experts in the fields of land use, development and economic issues are being asked to answer questions relative to what growth might be if I-93 is widened or not widened.
- Over the past year, the Department has been working with local safety (police and fire) agencies, State Police, and the FHWA to consider what steps might be taken to improve incident management capabilities; that is, addressing accidents along I-93 in a more timely manner to minimize delays and congestion. Some measures have been implemented and other will be added over the next year to improve the incident management capabilities before construction, during construction, and after construction is completed along the corridor.

- The Department is also pursuing mitigation sites along the corridor. One site in Salem is under construction and nearing completion; a second site in Londonderry is under design and will be constructed next year. The Department is working with each of the communities along the corridor to identify additional sites that will be necessary to offset the highway widening impacts to the environmental resources.

Jeff provided an overview of public feedback heard from the various local meetings. That feedback focused on the need to:

- Begin widening construction as soon as possible.
- Minimize impacts to private properties.
- Construct sound barriers to screen and shield neighborhoods.

Jeff also noted that the public, in a broad sense, feels that a 4-lane widening should be done vs. the 3-lane widening, with the idea that a 3-lane widening would require additional widening soon after the 3-lane widening is complete.

The individual towns have also expressed their particular concerns relative to how the project affects their communities.

For Salem a primary issue has been that the project not exacerbate the flooding that occurs in the Town and within the Spickett River watershed today.

For Windham and Salem, a predominant issue has been the need to address water quality and highway runoff, especially with Canobie Lake and Cobbetts Pond located adjacent to the corridor. Windham is also very much interested in ways to reduce the overall footprint of the highway and the Exit 3 interchange.

In Londonderry and Salem, the neighborhoods have expressed concern about the proposed park and ride lots and the impacts on their quality of life. Various alternatives or means of minimizing impacts are being considered.

Plan Presentation:

Tony Grande then presented the concept plans, including a regional perspective overview plan and a typical roadway cross-section plan for the 4-lane option which includes four 12' travel lanes and 12' wide shoulders on the inside and the outside of each barrel. Tony noted that space (ranging from 60' to 90') for a potential future rail line is also being reserved within the median. The bike trail is conceptually depicted at the toe of slope or top of bank along the corridor from Exit 2 to Exit 5.

Tony also described a 400-scale plan showing the entire project limits beginning at the MA/NH state line and proceeding north to the I-93/I293 split in Manchester. Tony noted that for the 400-scale plan a 4-lane option is shown, but a 3-lane option is also available. Tony briefly presented the various interchange and mainline options for the entire project.

- Exit 1, two interchange options: rehabilitate existing interchange ramps with substandard geometry; or reconstruct the ramps to improve geometry.
- Exit 2, two interchange reconstruction options: diamond type interchange configuration; or diamond type configuration NB and loop configuration for the SB ramps.
- Exit 3, a range of options that include: (potentially nine choices) various combinations of improvements for NH 111, I-93 mainline, and the NB/SB ramp configurations.

- Exit 4, two mainline options: easterly widening option that retains the existing SB ramps; or westerly widening option, which requires reconstruction the SB ramps.
- Exit 5, three interchange options: diamond interchange configuration with NH 28 on-line; or diamond interchange configuration with NH 28 off-line to the east of I-93; or diamond interchange configuration SB with NB interchange ramps realigned opposite Liberty Drive.

Tony noted that the space for a potential future railroad corridor is proposed. This rail corridor begins in Massachusetts, either connected to the existing Manchester to Lawrence line or perhaps connected to a new line that would follow I-93 in MA to the Woburn Transportation Center. Space for a corridor would be reserved in NH for either option. In NH, the rail line begins outside the median at the MA/NH state line and continues northerly and westerly of I-93 until just north of Exit 1 where the rail would cross into the median and continue inside the median through Exit 5. North of Exit 5, the line would be connected to the existing Manchester to Lawrence Branch to the west of I-93. This would provide the potential for a future connection to the Manchester Airport or downtown Manchester.

In addition, three new Park and Ride facilities are being proposed as part of the I-93 corridor improvements with facilities planned at Exits 2, 3 and 5.

Tony then described the proposed 200 scale improvement plans and options for the I-93 corridor within the Salem area. The plans depict both 3-lane and 4-lane layout options for the I-93 mainline, beginning at the MA line in Salem, and ending at the Salem/Windham Town line.

MA line to Exit 1

Beginning at the southern end of the project, the eastern edge of pavement is held as a control through the majority of this section. The widening is to the west in this area to minimize impacts to Policy Brook. The mainline concept has been extended south of the MA line to introduce a fourth lane in the NB direction at the Route 213 NB on-ramp. Near the MA/NH border an auxiliary lane is added to transition to a 5-lane section for a short distance until the introduction of a 2-lane collector-distributor (C/D) road for traffic wishing to use the rest area or the Exit 1 NB Off-ramp. The Exit 1 NB Off-ramp will be a 2-lane off-ramp transitioning and matching into the existing 3-lane section approaching Rockingham Boulevard.

Tony noted that at Cross Street two options were being considered: an on-line option with a temporary detour to the North and an off-line option using a curved girder bridge design aligned to the north. The Department is recommending that the off-line option be carried forward.

Tony described the two options for the Exit 1-interchange SB ramps, the first would retain the existing substandard ramp geometry and reconstruct the ramps with the appropriate grade changes as necessary to provide for clearance over I-93. The second option would provide an improvement to the existing geometry (so as to meet minimum standards) and reconstruct the ramps on new location, further to the west. The Department is recommending that the ramps be reconstructed to improve the geometry and provide for the minimum design standard.

Continuing to the north, the inside edges of I-93 are being held with widening to the east for the NB barrel and to the west for the SB barrel to minimize impacts to Porcupine Brook in the median.

Exit 2 Interchange

At Exit 2 the NB ramps would be reconstructed and would retain the diamond type configuration as exists today. The SB ramps have two options. One option constructs a new diamond configuration, similar to the NB ramps. A second option would provide a WB Pelham Road to I-93 SB loop ramp configuration, which would merge with EB Pelham Road to I-93 SB On-ramp traffic.

The SB On-ramp vehicles would then merge down to one lane before merging with the I-93 SB mainline traffic. The major difference between the two configurations is that the loop option eliminates one traffic signal along Pelham Road through the interchange area, while the diamond option has less impact due to a smaller footprint. Pelham Road will be widened to a 5/6-lane section to help move the traffic through the interchange more efficiently under either option and both options will provide an acceptable level of service. The Department is recommending that the diamond alternative be carried forward.

Brookdale Road

Brookdale Road has two options, an off-line option where a new bridge is constructed to the south of the existing bridge and an on-line option where the new bridge would be constructed along the alignment of the existing bridge with a temporary detour bridge to the south. The Department is recommending that the on-line alternative be carried forward.

Park and Ride Lot at Exit 2

A park and ride lot is planned at Exit 2 with access to the Park and Ride from Raymond Avenue, which will be widened and reconstructed. The reconstruction will extend to South Policy Road, which will be widened, and a new signal installed.

Bike Trail

A bike trail is also shown along the I-93 corridor. The bike trail would begin at the Exit 2 park and ride lot and follow along the eastern side of the NB barrel into Windham and continue northerly to the Exit 5 area. Potential connectivity to local roads, park and ride lots, and the regional bike network is being considered.

Noise Barriers

Noise barrier locations are currently being recommended in the following four locations in Salem:

- South of Rest Area near Haigh Avenue/Azarian Drive, NB side
- MacLarnon Road and MacGregor Street, Exit 1NB off-ramp
- Fern Road near NH 38, SB
- North of Brookdale Road along South Shore Road, NB

In addition, noise barriers are still being evaluated at the following two locations:

- Across from Rest Area, Valeska Lane, SB
- North of Brookdale Road, SB, near May Lane

Property Acquisitions

Tony identified the locations of the various homes and businesses that may be acquired as part of the highway improvements. The total number of acquisitions would vary depending upon which option they include:

I-93 Widening & Rail	NH 38 (2); Trolley Lane (2)	4 Ho.
Rail Corridor ROW	Valeska Lane (1); Williston Rd. (2)	3 Ho.
Cross Street Options	Off-line, Cross St. (1); Brady Ave. (1)	2 Ho.
Pelham Rd. Options	Diamond Option (1)	1 Ho.
Park and Ride	Raymond Ave (8)	7 Ho. & 1 Bus.

Matrix and Handouts

Tony then described the tables and graphics provided as handouts, which include: 1000 scale color plans of the various improvement options for the four-lane widening of I-93. The handouts also include a summary matrix for both the 3-lane and 4-lane alternatives. The project was split into six segments reflecting the various options along the I-93 corridor. The matrix was developed to better understand how one segment/option compares against another segment/option with respect to environmental and socio-economic impacts. The matrix can also be used to total the impacts for the entire corridor. Tony noted that the matrix is just a quick reference of impacts and cannot really tell the true story of each option without the supporting text, which will be included in the DEIS document.

Floodplain Investigation:

Mike Leo explained that, as part of the highway widening, the Department was looking at flood storage impacts specific to I-93 corridor improvements within the Spicket River watershed. The Department is trying to develop a mitigation plan that replaces flood storage losses near impacted locations, so as not to exacerbate the existing flooding problems that occur in Salem.

Mike provided a brief overview of the Spicket River Watershed, which includes an area within New Hampshire of approximately 75 square miles, as outlined on the USGS map. Any impacts to FEMA designated floodplain areas, from the widening of I-93, would likely occur in Salem in the vicinity of the state line. Mike explained that two studies have been completed previously, looking at flooding issues in the Salem area and that those studies have been reviewed. Study recommendations include lowering the water levels at Arlington Mill Reservoir and Big Island Pond, and maintaining valley flood storage areas. Lowering the water elevation of existing reservoirs is not feasible, as it would have negative effects on the recreational use of these water bodies.

Mike presented a profile of the Spickett River, which demonstrates the fact that the topography is somewhat hilly north of Salem, but nearly flat through Salem. As a result of the flat terrain, runoff from the watershed moves more slowly through Salem creating flood situations. In addition, in Methuen the Lowell Street Dam holds back flood flow further complicating Salem's flood situation.

Mike also described the 400-scale plan depicting potential flood mitigation areas in the Salem area that could include valley storage mitigation and 100-year floodplain mitigation. In addition, it was explained that mitigation was proposed to replace potential losses to valley flood storage, within the Spicket River Watershed, in areas north of Salem.

Wetland Mitigation

Bill Barry explained that as part of the federal guidelines for projects like this the Department is required to mitigate impacts to wetlands. As such the process has begun to identify possible wetland mitigation sites to offset impacts resulting from the project improvements. Bill noted that the total number of wetland impacted for the project from Salem to Manchester is approximately 55 to 70 acres. In the Town of Salem the wetland impacts are approximately 17 to 24 acres. Both the quantity and the quality of wetland impacts need to be identified. In Salem, the quality of the wetlands was identified, based on professional judgment, as primarily moderate to high quality. Three major functions and values of the existing wetlands are identified which helps in determining the quality of the wetland. They include flood flow alteration (storage), water quality treatment function, and wildlife habitat.

As directed by the Resource Agencies, the project must provide compensatory mitigation to compensate for the impacts. The mitigation is essentially made up of four forms:

- Wetland restoration, which in effect restores previously, filled wetlands.
- Enhanced wetlands, by planting different plants or by changing the hydrology of existing wetland.
- Wetland creation, which creates wetlands out of upland or dry land area.
- Preservation, which involves preserving existing wetland and an adjacent upland. Preservation is popular to the local communities because the property is preserved in perpetuity and managed by the community or some other environmental agency.

Bill described a handout identifying 37 potential mitigation sites of which perhaps a few will be selected to provide some types of compensatory mitigation for the project. Two sites of the 37 are already included in the Department's advance mitigation areas. Currently, the Department has identified 13 potential (three creation sites, five flood plain sites and five preservation sites) sites in Salem as part of our evaluation. The flood plain sites are an attempt to compensate flood plain impacts using wetland mitigation. Bill explained that the locations need further evaluation and discussion with the communities and Resource Agencies as to which sites best serve the mitigation package. Bill noted that the process is flexible and welcomed input on the current list or the addition of other sites.

Schedule:

Jeff Brillhart noted that another round of meetings would be held in February and March with similar format to this one with the intent to further identify the Department's preferred alternative prior to the Public Hearing. The DEIS will be published some time in March. The Public Hearing is tentatively schedule for April or May of next year. The Final Environmental Impact Statement is scheduled for completion by the end of 2002. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2004.

Questions/Comments:

Comment:	Is the Department looking to go with three lanes or four lanes?
Jeff Brillhart:	The Department feels that the four-lane alternative is the preferred alternative. A final determination will be made as part of the Public Hearing process. Another option would be to build three lanes and over-widen the highway for the fourth lane in the future. At Exit 1, the relocated ramp option is preferred by NHDOT because we can improve the substandard geometry as a result. At Exit 2, the diamond option is preferred.
Tony Grande:	At Cross Street, the option to construct a new bridge immediately to the north of the existing and utilize the existing structure for traffic control during construction, is the preferred option. At Brookdale Road, the preferred option is to construct a new bridge on the existing bridge alignment and use a temporary detour bridge immediately to the south for traffic control.
Question:	What about rail and the possibility of a monorail?
Jeff Brillhart:	We are proposing a width of 60'-90' to accommodate a potential future light rail system. However the rail technology is changing very quickly and perhaps monorail or similar type will be more feasible. The current cost for monorail is very expensive.
Question:	Where are you recommending sound barriers?
Tony Grande:	Sound barriers are being recommended along the NB barrel near Haigh Avenue, south of the Rest Area; near MacGregor Street, along the Exit 1 NB off ramp; near

Fern Road along the SB barrel, south of NH 38; and along South Shore Road adjacent to the NB barrel. At two additional locations, adjacent to Valeska Lane and adjacent to May Lane, both along the SB barrel, we are still looking at various options that could help make these barriers economically feasible to construct.

Question: What is being done for detention pond areas?

Jeff Brillhart: We have approximated areas where storm water runoff from the highway can be treated. Additional land may need to be acquired to construct and maintain these areas.

Question: Will you be talking to the Conservation Commission?

Jeff Brillhart: We would be happy to talk to the Conservation Commission and set up a meeting to discuss the project in more detail.

Question: I own approximately 6-8 acres on Lowell Road that you may want to consider for a potential Park and Ride location.

Jeff Brillhart: Access for Lowell Road would make your site difficult, such a site would be circuitous for not only the commuters, but also the busses which like to be able get on and off the highway fairly quickly.

Question: Is there a point in time where if we build three lanes now, we will have to come back and build four lanes?

M. Kennedy: Traffic projections indicate that in 20 years, we will need four lanes in each direction. There is a very short time frame where three lanes would be effective, and there is a very strong case for four lanes, especially south of Exit 3.

Jeff Brillhart: The traffic numbers show that we could use 5 lanes south of Exit 1 to meet the future traffic demand.

Question: Regarding the Park and Ride at Exit 2, I see this is as an attraction for teenagers to party. I am concerned about security and headlights shining onto my property.

Jeff Brillhart: The Park and Ride lot would see fairly continuous use throughout the day. With that said, your concern should be restated at the Public Hearing.

Question: Whose jurisdiction does the Park and Ride come under?

Jeff Brillhart: The Park and Ride is owned and maintained by the State, and patrolled by the Town and State Police.

Question: Are provisions being made for snowmobile and ATV crossing over or under the highway?

Jeff Brillhart: Good question. If there is an existing trail, connectivity would be maintained.

Question: How will people from the Park and Ride be kept off of Fairmont Road?

Jeff Brillhart: We propose to have a gated entrance for emergency access only between the Park and Ride lot and Fairmont Road.